

Through the proper channels

By Sidney Pollard

SIR NORMAN CRESTER:
The Nationalisation of British Industry 1945-51
1,075pp. HAISSO. £21.

W. J. READER:
Imperial Chemical Industries: A History
Volume 2: The First Quarter-Century 1926-1952
569pp. Oxford University Press. £18.50.

There are many inherent weaknesses in official histories, but in the wartime series the sheer excitement of events, and the fact that we are all, as it were, on the same side, helps to carry the story along. Both these props fall away in peace-time. The present volume has everything in its favour: a skilled narrator, a clearly limited series of events with a beginning and an end, and possibly the major class of political principle in this century. Yet in this end it does not make a history, and hardly even a chronicle.

Sir Norman Crestes, as is usual, writes with freedom of opinion, but he has had to base himself on official sources, and *The Nationalisation of British Industry* is therefore written from within the department, as administrative history. There are a few interesting passages on procedural points, and on who attended where and in what capacity and for how many hours, which are no doubt matters of interest to the small number of people concerned, but scarcely justify the large public expenditure in recording them. Even the more important issues, like the debate on conscription clauses in the various nationalisation bills, are forced into the same procedural straitjacket. Thus the arguments for or against a particular proposal are not marshalled in logical order, but are enumerated as they were made back and forth to debate in the House, in committee, or in the House of Lords. The result, not only is a confused, conceptual framework, which lies behind the arguments at each side often obscured, but the sordid reader, who after twenty years is entitled to feel like a Wimbledon spectator, may be forgiven for not being certain which is the amendment, and which the substantive motion. Certainly, even from the point of view of a work of reference, examining the changes of each debate, showing what had finally passed into legislation, would have been helpful.

In spite of the unhelpful framework, some things stand out: the early phasing out of trade-union

influence on the legislation; the way in which the governor of the Bank of England seemed to operate from within Whitehall, rather than as a victim to be taken over; the skill and power of obstruction of the iron and steel industry, led by Sir Andrew Duncan. Best of all is a glimpse of Harold Macmillan in committee arguing that Treasury control over the Boards be minimized, for the Treasury "takes a far shorter view of life than business undertakings": it would be hard to compress into fewer words the cause of our economic failure since the Second World War, and of the problems of the nationalized industries.

But these nuggets are hard to find in the mountain of trivia. For it is one of the greatest drawbacks of this kind of bland, impartial, administrative history—that the editor should choose the outline of the series—what it lacks a value system, even so to what is important or not. The vital questions of ministerial control, or investment policies, are treated in nine of the sixteen volumes. The question of who should carry the insurance, or how to pay compensation to employees. Who would guess from this book that here was the most serious clash on political principle, between the two major British parties since the war—first in 1917.

It should be stressed that this book is not about the nationalized industries, but only about the process of nationalizing them during the first two post-war Labour ad-

ministrations. This will impart a certain bias to the overall impression which it leaves with the reader, and yet, in one important respect, the emphasis is the correct one: as the victorious Labour Government set about putting its electoral programme into practice, it was less in a spirit of changing the economic basis of society, and more in the concern of showing due respect to tradition and parliamentary procedure. Everything had to be fitted, as far as was humanly possible, into existing frameworks and precedents. Innovation was discouraged by the sides of the House, and these in the Civil Service, who had been a part of the policy of ICI and its predecessor since 1920.

What made ICI such a power, yet kept it out of the list of nationalized industries? If W. J. Reader is to be believed, it was certainly not its success, for its first years as an amalgamated concern were marked by mistakes and failures of staggering dimensions. The most devastating of these was the massive development of Billingham as a nitrogen fertilizer plant, the plan for which formed possibly the single most important reason for the formation of ICI, just before the world's agricultural markets were about to collapse, so that no more than a small fraction of its cap-

city was ever used. Another of the large commitments to the generation, the manufacture of a from coal, which turned out to be another costly mistake. And, third, was the failure to develop a synthetic rubber, destined to become the product with the most promising future. It survived all these, and although at one stage it was on the verge of being sold to the Americans, it was preserved by its independence in this respect also. For Dr Reader's account is not in the language of ordinary people. His flatness of tone was to some extent deliberate, and it had, as he revealed in a selected edition of *Edward Thomas*, a respectable ancestry. Yet a comparison of these two poets, both minutely concerned with the dignity of rural things, can serve as a reminder of R. S. Thomas's limitations, which are not only or primarily of subject. The truth is that he does without must in the resources of poetry: urbanity, but also the play of wit that is Iachmet's better half; drama, but also the sense of dramatic pitch that makes for a modulated speech. Mr Thomas has endeavored in his very largely successful, in becoming a poet without charm.

At this high cost his poems give a detailed and often moving account of their own experience of composition. Or so they have done in the past. *Laboratories of the Spirit* may signal a break with Mr Thomas's earlier work. The poems in this volume employ a language of religious and personal crisis. Nothing about them would lead one to call it a crisis of belief, though the matter is not so clear. Mr Thomas's earlier work, the poems in this volume employ a language of religious and personal crisis. Nothing about them would lead one to call it a crisis of belief, though the matter is not so clear.

In the 1950s the cosy world of market sharing, protection began to change. Mr Thomas's range was diversified, numerous new products, from ideas and artificial fibres to drugs, and internal reorganization and hardly keep pace with the change in market reality. New men as over from Lurgi McGowan, who ruled for nearly thirty years, nearly absolute autocrat, but of this, Dr Reader modestly writes, being too near to the present, outside the historian's field.

attempt to demonstrate that Chinese crisis behaviour is rational rather than idiosyncratic. This is a fascinating book in that it does provide a plausible interpretation of Chinese military behaviour in the three decades where territorial gains have been at stake. The author, of course, is obliged to draw conclusions on the basis of beliefs whose origins are in the nature of things, but a strong case is made for the view that Chinese conduct is light of three criteria, none of which is a willingness to expose vulnerability arising from lack of weakness, a willingness to expose vulnerability through calculated intelligence, and a sense of duty in conveying deterrent signals in a manner which takes account of problems of the adversary's response.

A feature of this book is the way in which it illuminates the divide between the American and the Chinese worlds and its intellectual community. One striking example of such thinking and the kind of access that it can give to the scholar is provided when Professor Whiting refers to the American bombing of North Vietnam beginning in 1965. "The laboratory of the spirit," all of these good citizens can be found on the first page of Mr Thomas's book. "Poetry," observed Wallace Stevens, "must retain the intelligence almost successfully." Mr Thomas's recent poems, apart from a grammatical obscurity here and there, resist hardly at all. Sincerity for its own sake has little to do with poetry; and it is wrong for the poet to reduce the world to those familiar quantities, we and they. We, says Mr Thomas, may be tempted by fashionable unbelief.

We demand our reason from skies that have the emptiness of our affirmations. But in the end we may be enlightened, as leaves from the deciduous Cross fall on us, weeding us clean, turning our autumn to gold by the effluence of their fountain. This, on the other hand, "are isolating the human virus and burning it up in the fire of reason; of this, Mr Thomas is inclined to sound especially melancholy at the end of a poem, and this tendency to drive a point home is equally a point not connected with the subject at hand—quite a number of otherwise modestly successful poems. For readers of American poetry, Mr Thomas's brand of idiosyncrasy will be a welcome new, if not a welcome old, addition.

The verbal formulae "the . . . of . . . " recurs throughout the collection, but the incantatory effect is of last monotonous, a symptom of neurotic lackness in the writing. The great poem of the volume, "The adolescent poem of the mind," the adult geometry of the mind," all of these good citizens can be found on the first page of Mr Thomas's book. "Poetry," observed Wallace Stevens, "must retain the intelligence almost successfully." Mr Thomas's recent poems, apart from a grammatical obscurity here and there, resist hardly at all. Sincerity for its own sake has little to do with poetry; and it is wrong for the poet to reduce the world to those familiar quantities, we and they. We, says Mr Thomas, may be tempted by fashionable unbelief.

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Under the influence

By David Bromwich

R. S. THOMAS:
Laboratories of the Spirit
65pp. Macmillan. £2.25.
JOHN FULLER:
The Mountain in the Sea
46pp. Secker and Warburg. £2.40.

During the 1950s R. S. Thomas played a curious role in the making of a "plain style" for British poetry. Odd, unacademic, with severe geographical and emotional limits, his work seemed to care about the lives of ordinary people in the language of ordinary people. His flatness of tone was to some extent deliberate, and it had, as he revealed in a selected edition of *Edward Thomas*, a respectable ancestry. Yet a comparison of these two poets, both minutely concerned with the dignity of rural things, can serve as a reminder of R. S. Thomas's limitations, which are not only or primarily of subject. The truth is that he does without must in the resources of poetry: urbanity, but also the play of wit that is Iachmet's better half; drama, but also the sense of dramatic pitch that makes for a modulated speech. Mr Thomas has endeavored in his very largely successful, in becoming a poet without charm.

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a less lucky, less artistically confident, version of Robinson Jeffers. His literary opulence, set forth in a poem on "Tussock", are calculated to increase his sense of isolation. Tomson? Browning? If I mention them, it is but from convention, despite the vowel technique of the one, the other's moral check. Then Hardy, for many a major poet, is for me just an old-stager, shuffling about a bogus health, cobwebbed with his Victorian breath.

Do these verses sound at any rate fresh of their kind? Alas, Mr Thomas is only rewriting another bad poem, John Crowe Ransom's "Survey of Literature" ("Then there was poor Willa Blake, / He founded our sweet cake"). "Sea-Watching", "The Chapel", "The Moon in Llyn", and a set piece out of Lawrence, "Ann Griffith", are the poems here that one would not want to have missed. Not difficult to have, and they are, except in the prevailing mood of a poem, by no means among Mr Thomas's worst, that shows some of the difficulties of his present phase is "Hill Christmas". "They come over the snow in the purer snow, / fumbled it in their hands, / put their lips in it / like beasts, / stured into the dark / where the wine shows, felt it sharp / on their tongue, / slivered as at a sin / remembered, and heard love cry / momentarily in their hearts' / manner.

They rise and went back to their holdings, naked in the bleak light of December. Their horizon to the one small, connected field with its tree, where the weather was the nipped body that had asked to be born.

The gesture of sympathy in the first line is a little overbearing, a little heavy with humanity; and "beasts' manger" is on one ugly and facile; but so reader would deny the cumulative force of the tableau: "The one small, stone-ridged field with its tree" rounds it off with a fine cadence; and, of course, Mr Thomas's poems always have a sewing remnant when he is writing about actual people. The poem is disturbing, perhaps chiefly because of its too-steady and not fully earned insistence on the hopelessness of all sacrifice and all life. There is a literary portentousness to it, a slight overblownness, so much more than the naming of it. And why, for the purposes of this poem in particular, must the body of Christ (or the newborn babe) be "appalled"? In what sense is it "appalled"? Even if we use his best, Mr Thomas is too complacent about proposing and disposing.

The Devil for a look / Might carve his own Initiale on our desk, / And yet we miss the plot because for its own sake has little to do with poetry; and it is wrong for the poet to reduce the world to those familiar quantities, we and they. We, says Mr Thomas, may be tempted by fashionable unbelief.

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Built to please

By Anthony Blunt

DEBORAH HOWARD:
Jacopo Sansovino
Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice
208pp and 129 illustrations. Yale University Press. £8.25.

This is a fascinating book, full of information and very readable. Its subtitle gives a better idea of its theme than the title itself, because, as Deborah Howard explains in the preface, it is primarily a study of Venetian patronage, as illustrated in the work of one architect. It is not a monograph on Sansovino—this gap was filled by Tafuri's monograph of 1969—so, for instance, his sculpture is hardly considered, except in so far as it forms part of his architecture, and his early buildings in Rome are only mentioned when they provide relevant comparisons with his Venetian works.

Jacopo Sansovino is therefore primarily an examination of the complex system which controlled building in Venice in the sixteenth century. The innocent might suppose that patrons of the arts were simply divided into two categories—public and private—but it was in fact a great deal more complicated than that. First there was the state, which in effect meant the Council of Ten (which at this date consisted of some twenty members) under the presidency of the Doge; then there were the Procurators of St Mark's, who were an independent body which controlled—owing to the bequest of a medieval doge—the whole of the Piazza and the Palazzo della Scuola della Misericordia, mainly because the money was constantly running out, but he was luckier in the three private palaces which he built for the Delfino, Camer and Morn families.

Sansovino was involved with all these bodies. For the Procurators of St Mark's he built the library and the Loggia, and for the Council of Ten he built the Palazzo della Misericordia. In the ecclesiastical field he built churches for the monasteries of S. Francesco della Vigna and S. Spirito, and two parish churches, S. Martino and S. Giuliano; one of his most frustrating commissions was the Scuola Grande della Misericordia, mainly because the money was constantly running out, but he was luckier in the three private palaces which he built for the Delfino, Camer and Morn families.

Next came the church; but here the patronage was far from uniform. The monastic churches were, on the whole, richer than the parishes, but occasionally a parish church was lucky in getting the support of a rich patron. The inkeepers whose establishments had in the demolished to build the library had to be found alternative accommodation in an equally good area—a problem which Sansovino solved by keeping the cheese shops in this site of the mint raised rubble when they were threatened with being transformed to the Rialto; and all

did settings for their existence in this one. And last of all, though very important, were the individual patrons who—if fate decreed on the one hand that their uncle died childless so that they inherited several fortunes, or, on the other, that the family palace was destroyed by fire—were prepared to affirm their importance by splendid constructions on the Grand Canal or one of the other distinguished quarters of Venice.

Even this formulation of the system would be an oversimplification, however, because a procurator was likely to be a member of the Council of Ten, or the brother of the doge; the abbot of a monastery would certainly have relations in these high places, those who controlled the Scuola were inevitably members of the great Venetian families, and if a private individual was rich enough to rebuild his palace, he would certainly have been a member of one of the councils of state and would probably thought it advisable to secure the salvation of his soul by a benefaction to a Scuola or a monastery, or by building his own chapel in one of the parish churches.

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Drawing lots

By Quentin Bell

COLIN ELSLER:
A Treasury of Great Master Drawings
332 drawings. Phaidon. £13.50.

One opens this book with high expectations; the drawings of the great masters are in some ways the most fascinating, certainly the most intimate part of their oeuvre; they show us the artist thinking aloud, forming his designs, freely meditating and correcting as he works without any of the polished suavity that may sometimes spoil our pleasure in a completed work. And then there is so much fine drawing that we hardly ever see; surely it would be easy, with so many riches to hand, to provide a book which really would be a treasury.

Apparently it is not so easy. It is no doubt unavoidable that one man's anthology should differ widely from another's; nevertheless, when one has made all possible allowances for differences of taste, one cannot but think that this is a rather odd selection. Confining himself to Europe and disregarding antiquity, the editor (or at least the publisher) provides a certain number of famous masterpieces which suffer only from being a little too familiar; and a number of less famous drawings, which, though certainly beautiful, can hardly be classed as masterpieces. Sarah Landry, Martin Fremantle, Jasper Francis Cropsey are certainly very respectable draughtsmen, but their work is not quite the kind of thing that one expects to find in *A Treasury of Great Master Drawings*.

One looks for an explanation in

the text; but here minglings are complicated by perplexity. For whom, one wonders, is this book intended? The pictures, or most of them, are annotated with the careful precision of an exhibition catalogue; mediaevalism, provincialism and bibliography being supplied. There is also a note on graphic techniques and conservation. And yet this is not an up-to-date version of the *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (which, incidentally, is not noticed in notes or bibliography). Indeed, so far from being a work for scholars the book contains no list of illustrations, let alone an index. Colin Elsler is so far from this minutiae of erudition that he attempts to give a complete history of drawing in Europe from the Middle Ages to the present day, and then to provide an historical survey of the various genres into which he has divided the illustrations—all in about 10,000 words. One would like to know what he is taking of the *Handbuch*, and what he is still a copy brand. Journalists, who would be hard to say, but it is in order to meet the exigencies of the author's text, and in fact almost looks as though he had no say in choosing the illustrations. The result is that the whole book has a marked air, as though the publishers had had some picture available and had asked for a text of any kind of text, to give them a sense of consequence. Ventures of this kind are not unknown in publishing world; but they do not usually appear under the imprint of Phaidon.

Criticisms such as these appear to be beside the point. Applied to what is, essentially, a nice glossy book full of lovely art, certainly many of the reproductions are attractive; whether they are accurate is another matter. And, as for the text, it is a pity that the book is not more fully produced.

For the "Renaissance de la Méditerranée" should be classified as "genre" I would be hard to say, but it is in order to meet the exigencies of the author's text, and in fact almost looks as though he had no say in choosing the illustrations. The result is that the whole book has a marked air, as though the publishers had had some picture available and had asked for a text of any kind of text, to give them a sense of consequence. Ventures of this kind are not unknown in publishing world; but they do not usually appear under the imprint of Phaidon.

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Portraitist of an age

By Jean Seznec

H. H. ARNASON:
The Sculptures of Houdon
294pp and 144 illustrations. Phaidon. £20.

In *The Sculptures of Houdon* H. H. Arnason's primary concern is with surviving sculptures which can be securely identified, and which he believes to be from Houdon's hand. Houdon's research, in his view, has not sufficiently concentrated on the works themselves. Louis Réau's posthumous book of 1961 should have been a definitive study, but the editors did not achieve all his intentions; and the book includes, as authentic, a substantial number of works to which Mr Arnason takes exception.

The problem is a complex one: it is made exceedingly difficult by the sheer multiplicity of copies, replicas, and versions in different materials. Many of these were made by Houdon himself or under his control—in the case of busts, at the request of the sitter. Diderot, for instance, requested five plaster copies of his bust at Langres, to be distributed to the aldermen of the city. With Sophie Arnould, the sculptor agreed to deliver the marble of her bust, plus the terracotta which had served as the model, plus thirty copies in plaster—promising not to make any further busts in any material for anyone else! Pastiches and forgeries also proliferated, even in Houdon's lifetime. He bitterly complains in 1794: "Old Regime, my works were constantly recast, forged with my name put on them, while others, even less honest, simply copied them adding their own names; and now, despite the decrees, the convention to protect the arts and ownership, they continue to be sold, to be exhibited, to be paraded, publicly, and to rob me of my labours."

It must be added that Houdon's own increasing casualness in signing and dating his late works makes identification still more difficult.

Faced with this problem, Mr Arnason's answer is not to draw up a catalogue raisonné, but to establish "a basis for a canon of authenticity" by describing and illustrating the best and certainly genuine works, arranged in chronological order and with special attention to the earlier ones; he then records Houdon's production from Salon to Salon from 1760 to 1796, after which, as he goes, to follow the course of his life and the evolution of his style. He thinks it necessary, however, to begin by placing the artist in the perspective of the French tradition, all the way from the Renaissance. This is inevitably a sweeping survey; Germain Pilon and Jean Goujon are dealt with in a few epithets, and the sculptural style of the grand siècle is defined as the one "given authority by the founding of the French Académie royale, founded in 1664, not the Académie française". He then

proceeds with Houdon's artistic formation.

He grew up among artists, "at the door of the Académie" as he puts it, as his father was concierge of the Ecole des élèves protégés; he got his first prize in 1761; and was sent in 1764 to Rome, where he spent the next four years. His early student works have disappeared; but five statues (in different versions) survive from his Roman period. His close contact with antiquity, his affinity with its spirit, are mostly in the "Vestal" and the "Fest of the Lupercal", while the famous "Scorcher" intended as a preliminary study for the "St John" for the "St Bruno". In his profound, contemplative simplicity, it is in perfect contrast with the baroque tradition as illustrated by Rodin's treatment of the same subject. Although such themes—history, religion or mythology—were uppermost in the academic hierarchy, whereas the portrait was considered a minor genre, Houdon, back in Paris in 1768, dedicated himself mostly to portrait sculpture. Perhaps, as Mr Arnason suggests, because there were few opportunities for large-scale commissions. It was, in any case, the bent of his genius, and his true vocation.

Among his earliest at the Salon of 1771 were a "Marquise" (the marble version of a "marquise de réception" for full membership of the Académie) and a bust of Diderot, which Mr Arnason, quite rightly, discusses at some length. It provides him with an opportunity to note those technical characteristics which became further personal signatures of the sculptor, particularly the modelling of the eyes—so vivid that Grazeux imagined them to be made of enamel—and the more so since they look slightly past the spectator. Another feature of Diderot's bust introduced a new epoch in the history of portraits: it is treated à l'antique, a torso truncated and undraped, without wig, stripped of all accessories. This is in fact how Diderot pictured himself. In the playful description of the bust, Mr Arnason might have quoted: "J'avais un grand front, des yeux très vifs, d'assez grands traits, la tête toute à fait du caractère d'un ancien auteur." Diderot himself admitted that the bust is "très ressemblant" (a disappointingly brief comment). Some ten years later, he was to offer the bronze cast to his native city.

Beyond individual likenesses, Houdon achieved a "typical" one: Diderot's bust also personifies "the philosopher and the man of letters". This is precisely what La Tour had explained to Diderot himself, in the letter which he wrote on the condition of the sitter, his profession. Houdon was to excel in this kind of differentiation. In his gallery of contemporaries, the military man, the lawyer, the scientist, betray themselves almost at first sight. It is not difficult, of course (as Mr Arnason observes), to read revealing traits in a portrait when the personality and the achievements of the sitter are already known; indeed, the more



Houdon's portrait of the Comtesse de Sabran (c. 1785); on illustration from *The Sculptures of Houdon* by H. H. Arnason.

we know of him, the more we enjoy Houdon's portraits: it is the pleasure of recognition. For the less famous, a fuller introduction would have been in order here. Madame de Chabrière (Belle de Zuylen), whose bust was also exhibited at the Salon of 1771, is simply presented by Mr Arnason as "a Dutch lady of letters, who lived most of her life in Switzerland". It might have been pertinent to recall that she once led James Boswell among her suitors, and that she enjoyed an ardent intellectual friendship with Benjamin Constant.

It is probably through Diderot's friend Grimm, the editor of the *Correspondance littéraire*, that Houdon was introduced to the German prince and (in the last months of 1771) to Catherine the Great, who became his patron. Here begins his "international" career. He visited the court of Saxony to study the location of a projected tomb chapel; he returned twice in 1773. At the Salon of that year four portraits of members of that German house appeared, transformed into noble Romans; there were also the Empress of Russia to the left, and the living model of the funeral monuments for the Galitzin princes' tomb—Alexis, the senator, and Mikail, the Field Marshal—commissioned by Dimitri, ambassador to France.

The Salon of 1775 saw (in Mr Arnason's words) "sensational developments in Houdon's art of portraiture, and an enormous expansion of his powers". From then on, individual portraits rather than monuments were to be his most regular commissions; and he no longer depended on foreign patronage. His reputation brought

him models from every sphere: government dignitaries, noble ladies, actors, wealthy bourgeois, gentlemen of the robe, great figures of the ancien régime on the wane such as Turgot and Mirabeau, and, perhaps, as Mr Arnason suggests, because there were few opportunities for large-scale commissions. It was, in any case, the bent of his genius, and his true vocation.

From now on, and until 1789, Houdon's production increased both in quantity and in variety; but so near the fatal date, it acquired a truly historical import.

This is the period when he finally gained access to the royal family: the king's brother, the Count of Provence, and his wife; his sons, Madame Adélaïde and Madame Victoire; Louis XVI himself, and Marie-Antoinette. This is also the time when he exhibited those busts of children (Alexandre and Louise Brongniart, his own daughter Sébille) which rank among his most delightful creations. He even ventured into animal sculpture, with the "Dead Thrush". At the Salon of 1777, the marble statue "Diana the Huntress" created a sensation by her complete nudity, and by her gait and bearing; *incessu patitur* (the Académie Française asked him for a "Mollart"; later, he was to do a "La Fontaine"; two affective replies to "the myth that he had no talent for posthumous portraiture"). He completed his series of the *philosophes*: after

"Hobbes", "d'Alembert", "Buffon" (for Catherine II), "Rousseau" (from the death mask). Voltaire died in the same year as Rousseau (1778), after having witnessed his own apotheosis: his bust by Houdon, crowned on the stage of the Comédie. The seated "Voltaire", perhaps the most famous of Houdon's works, is the supreme illustration of his genius for imitating not only the face but the entire figure with the intense sense of inner life.

In the meantime, the American Revolution had taken place. It opened a new phase in Houdon's career. Affiliated with the Lodge of the Nine Sisters, he met two fellow members, John Paul Jones and Benjamin Franklin; he made their portraits; this in turn led to the commissioning of the statue at Washington, on the recommendation of Jefferson, minister to France. A fascinating story, fully documented. In 1785, the sculptor, accompanied by Franklin, crossed the Atlantic, made studies from life for the "Washington"; we have the report on the sittings of Mount Vernon, with the technical details of the preparation of the plaster given by the sitter himself.

Washington's statue at Richmond is today facing that of Lafayette, which had been commissioned for the Virginia Assembly. The busts of all these initiators and leading figures of the American Revolution were in Jefferson's collection at Monticello. His own bust appeared, quite appropriately, at the Salon of 1789. It is one of the most striking, and the most perceptive: it reveals "the aristocrat, the intellectual, and the man of affairs"—as Franklin's bust radiated the wisdom and the benevolent humour of a bonhomme. Thus, the portrait gallery of the new republic was now complete, thanks to a French sculptor. No doubt the bicentennial celebrations have promoted its multiplication.

This however is far from exhausting the range of Houdon's productions during the years immediately preceding, and following, the French Revolution. To the "official" series of the great men of France (a kind of prefiguration of the Pantheon) he contributed his own, a superb "Tourville" as dramatic as a barnum, with his windswept hair and plumes; and to the roster of his famous contemporaries he added Suffren, the admiral, Quénay, the economist, the Montgolfier Brothers, the aeronauts, and Cagliostro, the charlatan. More distinguished foreigners sat for him. His family portraits now included the engaging, the Montgolfier, with her voluptuous laughter; Sabine at different ages, and her baby sisters.

The Salon of 1791—now open to all, as "the Revolution extends the empire of liberty to the arts"—introduced a new set of men who have left no mark on history: Neckar, Dumouriez, Mirabeau, whose powerful face (from the death mask) was to elicit Rodin's comment: "Is it not a marvellous achievement to evoke in this one head a whole crowd—nay, a whole country listening?" Houdon, at the same time, had been working on important commissions for architecture, religious, funerary and even garden sculpture, and he had cast in bronze his splendid "Diana". He was indeed to carry on bronze-casting on an expanded scale during the revolutionary years. He lists these achievements in the memorandum submitted in 1794 to Bachelier, where he recapitulates his career, to conclude:

I have dedicated myself essentially to two studies, to which I have devoted everything I have

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learned: anatomy and bronze casting. Being at the same time sculptor and metal founder, and reviving in my country this useful art which could have been lost, since all the founders were dead when I began to concern myself with it, I constructed furnaces, I worked in wood, I exhibited at the Salons were few during the imperial regime; so were his commissions. He had to endure David's enmity as he had once endured Caffieri's jealousy. Canova was the favoured sculptor of Napoleon and his court. Yet Houdon made, in 1806 and 1807, the bust of the emperor, and that of Josephine; and in 1812 he completed the bronze statue which was to be placed on a column at Bologna.

He had also to incur the disapproval of the critics, as a result of the changing of taste. Houdon's style, according to Mr. Arnason's somewhat over-simple formula, "had developed into a continual dialogue between rococo and classic". Neoclassicism was now the order of the day. When the "Dreux" exhibition again in 1802, it was received with scornful comment.

At the time when we were not yet familiar with the beauties of antiquity, this statue could have given us pleasure; but today, when we demand purity of design in a statue, it is impossible not to laugh at this unfortunate Diana who has not the slightest garment to conceal her French proportions.

As early as 1787, the large marble "Venus" had been disapproved of as "not sufficiently classic". The statue's robust elegance and essential nobility seem much closer to the great classical tradition than Canova's sweetish frigidity.

Houdon's last Salon was that of 1814; his last bust, that of Tsar Alexander I—the grandson of his

first royal patron, Catherine II, has long been accepted under the name of an opinion, said by Arnason, based on inadequate knowledge of the works themselves or of shaky attributions. Even today, the statue of "Venus" is said to be a "decline". Mr. Arnason under a spirited defence of these works, as "a fitting culmination, a 50-year career".

His book embraces the whole of that career; it also does not to the full range of the sculptor's talent. One may regret that a result of the arrangement of material, the enumeration and a discussion of the works must all too often with the narrative break its continuity: the study of the artist's work is thereby made more difficult. One may also regret the historical background (so important in this case) should rather sketchily drawn. Mr. Arnason who does not seem, at times, to credit his readers with even the most basic knowledge of the eighteenth century, does not always self display a close familiarity with the age, nor a particular eye for its spirit. The book's illustrations, a large proportion of which has provided himself with detailed photographs which he has taken of the sculptures, prove, in first place, an invaluable assistance for his purpose: by allowing examination and analysis, they help to authenticate the works. He still, as they were taken from different angles, and with subtle changes of lighting, they demonstrate the artist's skill in achieving the luminosity of the word, how he endures his work with that directness which is the supreme quality: *spiritus de vivis de miniature vivis*.

This direct comparison is most able if their evolution is to be appreciated. The same applies to other three great series of works, the *Disasters of War*, *Tauriniqua*, and the *Diana* which, with the *Capriccio*, are the bulk of the book, though only twenty-two drawings are related in paintings and came and some seventy-four in the cellanum section.

More again, in synthesizing the artist's work, with admirable clarity, all the previous collated study of this part of his work, the catalogue serves a useful function, and while Mr. Gassier makes no claim that his corpus can be either "exhaustive" or "definitive", there is little doubt that it comes extremely near it.

In the light of his discussion, the numerous references in the volume to the artist's work, it is a surprise that Mr. Gassier does not record or comment on the artist's sketchy studies of some kind or other, which appear in many of the preparatory drawings for *Capriccio*. He does, however, suggest that those on the *Diana* are in Goya's own hand, or at least that they are of his. It might be presumed that there was some scope here for the kind of detective work in which Mr. Gassier excels, but, on the contrary, by using the same methodical scrutiny employed for the albums, much that is new and significant has again emerged.

For instance, here for the first time the twenty-six studies in pen and sepia wash have been marshalled and presented in numerical order to show how, emerging from sketchy studies in the sketchbook, the artist's work evolved into the final, metamorphosed form, with the help of additional drawings in red chalk and sanguine wash, into the etching and aquatint of the eighty *Capriccios* as finally published in 1798. This is a study of the artist's mind, and of the most interesting sections of the book, in tracing Goya's use and adaptation of all this raw material. Mr. Gassier emphasizes the "dramatic" of it when it reached the engraved plate, many of the drawings being etched or even radically altered to give greater impact to a message already so forcibly expressed in his captions. It will be recalled that the preparatory drawings and related album subjects were all juxtaposed with the prints, which, in very small format, in the complete series of 1797, by Mr. Gassier and Juliet Wilson, and

The adventure of the painted pistol

By Robert Melville

ALFRED FRANKENSTEIN: After the Hunt William Harnett and other American Still Life Painters 1870-1900 200pp and 136 plates, University of California Press, £21.

This is the story of a highly successful, evocative and heroic of the story in the investigator himself, Alfred Frankenstein, art critic of the San Francisco Chronicle. He has the eye of an Indian tracker, the deductive powers of a Sherlock Holmes, the collective patience of a police force. He is faced by countless problems of attribution, but nearly all his hunches have a triumphant outcome and his progress is narrated in an unvarnished, amusingly old-fashioned prose style, which brings to mind those fictional members of Edwardian clubland who, like ancient mariners in dinner jackets, dominated the social scene with long accounts of unusual happenings.

A gracious, courteous lady answered my ring. I asked for Catherine Barry—if I had asked for Abraham Lincoln, she could not have shown greater interest. She said Catherine Barry was her mother's sister, but she had died many years before. (I never did find out when or where.) She said her own name was Anna Whitaker, and she said what brought me there. By this time the door had been open long enough for me to see a superb, unknown painting by Harnett on the living-room wall (plate 77). I quickly explained my errand, was invited inside to meet Anna Whitaker's sister, Nellie, and within a matter of minutes I had in my hands the richest collection of Harnettiana which has so far come to light.

The subject of the Inquiry was William Michael Harnett, the American painter of illusionistic still-lives, active in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He became successful towards the end of his life, and it was thought that he died a rich man, mistakenly so. Frankenstein discovers. He was forgotten and his death in 1892 and his posthumous fame began in the spring of 1935 when the Downtown Gallery in New York was offered a painting of a pistol hanging from a nail in an old, splintered door; which appeared to be a newspaper clipping, which someone at some time had inactively and incompetently stuck to the surface of the painting, leaving off the surface, turned out to be a part of the painting and on close examination proved to be unbreakable. The signature and date, "W. M. Harnett 1890" were clearly visible. Frankenstein, that "back there in the dark" was a virtuoso to be investigated.

By 1939 the Downtown Gallery was able to put on a show of fourteen still-lives bearing Harnett's name. The catalogue emphasized

the "arbitrary juxtaposition of unrelated objects" and the exhibition was treated not so much as a belated brilliant contribution to the art of seventeenth-century trompe l'oeil as a prediction of Surrealism. (It might be added that the shallow space and use of actual newsprint in certain Cubist works by Picasso and Braque were also "predicted" by Harnett.)

Eight years after the Downtown show more than a hundred paintings ascribed to Harnett had been bought by museums and private collectors, and Frankenstein, suspending his own hunt for Harnett, began an intensive examination of the pictures already found. He looked for the aspect of the paintings that had been admired by collectors of his works during his lifetime, "the perfect reproduction of the subject represented". About thirty of them were so far from achieving this kind of realism that he left them aside for future study. It left him with a body of work executed in two distinct styles, which were apparently interchangeable throughout his career. He calls

one style "hard" and the other "soft". A major characteristic of the hard style is the extraordinarily faithful reproduction of the textures of the various objects he delineated; another is the seeming projection of the ends of small objects like matches and knife handles into real space. In the soft style, the objects are represented in an indifferently painted but very pleasant paint texture, and there is an attempt to confuse the painted image with actuality. The hard paintings are signed and dated. None of the objects in the hard paintings appear in the soft paintings.

As all good writers of detective stories should, Frankenstein delays the solution of the puzzle as long as he possibly can. His researches involve him in a minia study of the letter-press pictures, in which miscellaneous papers are stuffed under scraps of Harnett's work. Most of them are in the soft style, and his scrutiny of the postcards, photographs, folded newspapers, bills, different handwritings and all

vides an all too brief discussion of the 1914-1915 sculptures, a list of innovations, and then a "catalogue raisonné" of the sculptor's graphic work. It is an odd mixture, but each of its parts is interesting, and it does add up to a persuasive argument for taking Archipenko more seriously.

The catalogue of prints is conscientious, and Mr. Karshian explains the opportunity it provides for oblique but telling comments on related sculptures. Yet, even though the print catalogue with its introduction fills more than half the book, Archipenko's reputation is best promoted by Mr. Karshian's preliminary discussion of the "heroic" years before 1914. Certainly there is great range in the portfolio of fourteen prints published in 1914 by Verlag Ernst Wasmuth (Mr. Karshian's own publishers), and certainly there is technical virtuosity in the 1903 portfolio *Les Femmes Vivantes*, but the graphic work was no more than a two-dimensional commentary on the sculpture, and Archipenko's sculpture after 1918 was itself no more than a commentary on the work he had produced during his early years of dare-devil creativity.

Under stress, then, is an ingrained gracefulness about the later work which is hostile to the whole arts of avant-garde art. Like many, Mr. Karshian writes orthodoxy like a refrain judging the whimsy in a series of imaginary races, and the plea for a new sculpture, and Archipenko's sculpture after 1918 was itself no more than a commentary on the work he had produced during his early years of dare-devil creativity. Under stress, then, is an ingrained gracefulness about the later work which is hostile to the whole arts of avant-garde art.

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facade between giving his pictures the finish which would satisfy his contemporaries and, by ruggedness of execution, presenting the light and freshness he saw in nature. Basil Taylor's dissociation of such painterly dilemmas will merit careful reassessment during the critical aftermath of Constable's bicentenary. The plates in this publication remain, in scale and scope, the most adequate single source of reference for Constable's large-scale paintings, and their related sketches.

The pig beneath the skin

By Alex de Jonge

STANLEY APPELBAUM:
Simplicissimus
180 Satirical Drawings from the
Famous German Weekly
172pp. Dover/Constable. Ppback.
£3.

There is a *Simplicissimus* cartoon by Th. Th. Heine, not reproduced in this collection, which depicts a young girl sleeping in the grass being kissed by a pig. In the caption she urges her lover Oskar to be less ardent, *nicht so süßlich*. The place, superbly drawn, is typical of one of the main kinds of *Simplicissimus* humour, an amused delight at the lighter side of *Schwänke*. Throughout its history there were jokes about couples too hot to make love, the home life of prostitutes, and half-naked women dancing the tango with ope. The impression gained—particularly if the reader is immune to the charm of the captions, usually in Bavarian dialect, less often Berliner, and can only read them in translation—is of a remarkably coarse and brutal vision, with the emphasis upon human ugliness; human weakness being taken for granted. Crude subjects are treated in vigorous style, to reveal a mean, herd world in which rich people are usually fat, and poor people always thin unless they are Bavarian peasants, in which case they are not really poor, are happy to be Bavarian, and are capable of extremes of credence.

Not even this selection, however, which gives pride of place to *Schwänke* in all its manifestations, implies that this was the sole theme of *Simplicissimus*. As a

weekly comic illustrated paper, produced and eventually owned by a slightly knut and highly talented editorial committee, it covered a wide range of topics, and changed with the times. From its foundation in 1896 up to the First World War it made fun of Prussians—and Wittelsbachs—mocked officers, students, Bavarians, German lady tourists and Protestant clergymen. Startlingly brutal by English standards, with captions that were often as unkind as anything to be found in *Krokodil* (that least funny of all funny papers), it still managed to retain a certain affection for its targets. It had none of the late one senses in *L'Assiette au Beurre*, or in Russian illustrated papers in those brief months of Russian history, after the 1905 revolution, when there was no censorship of the press. But although it may have lacked bitterness it can never be said that its crudity and brutality of vision were in any way redeemed by style. In the way that Danneberg could redeem his grotesques.

During the First World War it lost its identity in the interests of patriotism, but enjoyed a second flowering during the Weimar Republic. Hitler, unaccountably, permitted it to survive, but survival was all it did. During the 1920s it was broadly nationalistic, but free of obvious prejudice. It provided an excellent mirror of its time, emphasizing the poverty, squalor and human misery that was not obscured by a chorus of profiteers, capitalists, capitalist sinners and homosexuals of various persuasions. It projects the image of a Germany that either hobbled or dented, to remind us that Berlin in its "Golden



A cartoon by Th. Th. Heine in *Simplicissimus*, May 25, 1903

"Twenties" possessed more brutality than glamour, and that even there was ultimately depressingly, its bleakness. It is a sad, gray truth which has been buried under the layers of myth that have accumulated, from *The Threepenny Opera* to *Coburn*.

The point is well made by this selection, which devotes proportionately more space to Berlin and less to darkest Bavaria than did *Simplicissimus* itself. Indeed it virtually neglects a certain type of *Simplicissimus* joke: the kind involving a sausage ornaigned for being unfit for human consumption and

Taking part

By Stephen Bayley

FRANK POPPER:
Art Action and Participation
296pp. Studio Vista. £9.50.

Now that Tom Wolfe, fearless evant terrible of an international NW1, has let rip at the high art of modernism with all the flair and grease of a rock drill, it only remains for him to have a go at the fringe of modern art. If he did it well we would have nothing left, for the last survivors of that played-out genre of painting-on-concrete-to-hang-on-your-wall are already in disarray before the advance of the conceptualists. If Mr Wolfe is thinking of attacking the event-guards of the visual arts, would recommend him to read Frank Popper's latest book which will provide him with plenty of ammunition: the event-guards is, after all, his own worst enemy.

Dr Popper, whose credentials are otherwise respectable, has written a book to defend the grotesque perversion of taste which has produced conceptual art. *Art Action and Participation* follows his earlier study of kinetic art and

at first I thought it was the colour-printing when I saw a bright green Venetian canal, but reading on I learnt that the printing was not at fault. What had happened was that a certain Nicolas Urburu, an artist, had dropped thirty kilos of fluorescent sodium into the Venetian waterways in order to watch them change colour. For this magnificent, sublime conceit he was later detained by the Venetian authorities, but was released in good time to repeat his aesthetic pollution in both the East River and the Seine.

Dr Popper's book operates on a number of different levels, none of them very high. The problem he has set himself could have been a

Karl Arnold caricature of a struts Bavarian face, with a pipe, a glass, and swastika, eyes, or the dancing couple, woman telling the man that finds him as attractive as a wing putsch.

Trentant of Weimar is weakened by the decision to in 1926. One sympathizer of cost-conscious publisher who reminded a handsome book at a suitable price, but it is a pity he never put a foot outside public domain to include a to the later places—such as a calling on von Papen and get honary welenon on the one beside which there hangs a thin sign, "Popen one ring, Sök, two."

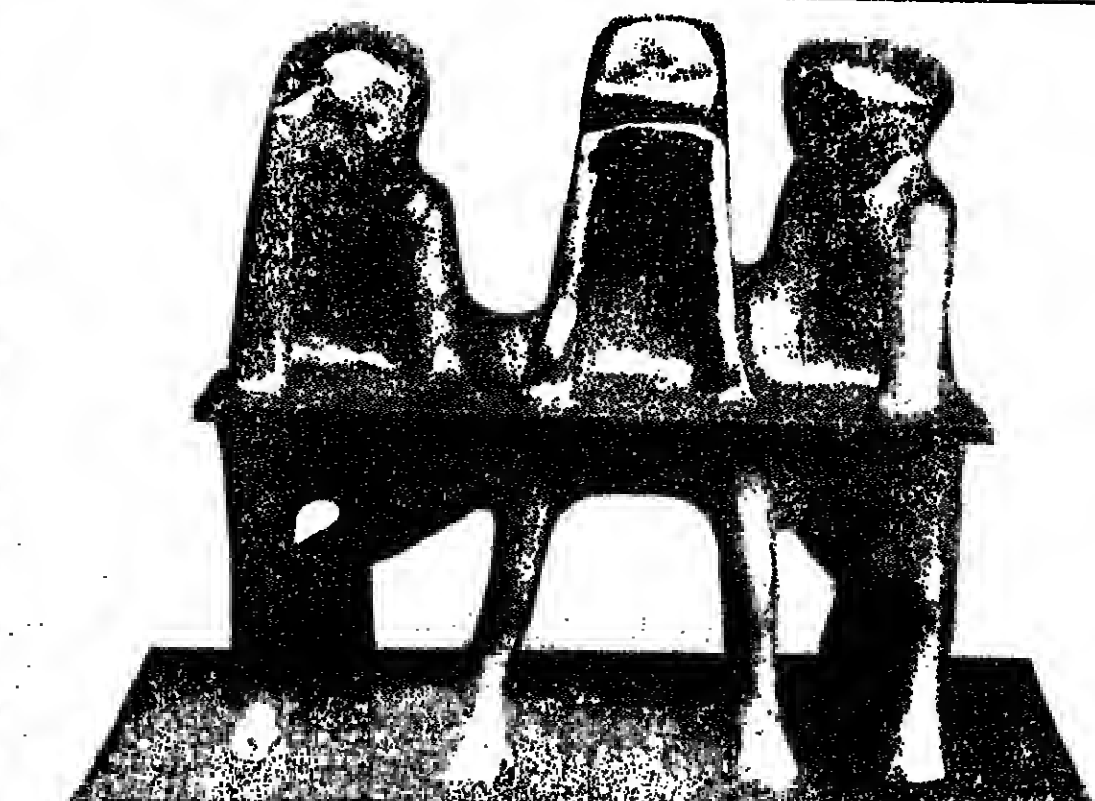
The collection does justice to the artist's greatest talents, at Heine, Arnold and Gullik. There are even some real colour plates, which indeed remind us of the debt that their artists, notably Benda, owed the Nazis. The edition included a lot of non-critical, naive studies of scenes, or even in the case of Benda's. By contrast, the caricatures proper are thought of as high art, genre studies with various regional stereotypes—e.g. in Berlin slums. By contrast, the non-satirical material is tried to convey the range of publication, yet the more often struck is that of the selection from the work of Benda's. The artist, who prior to the war was a member of an opposition group, ugly, depraved, distorted, raised to a higher plane by all-purifying power of style.

At first sight, therefore, the anthology appears to be a selection from the work of a single artist, who prior to the war was a member of an opposition group, ugly, depraved, distorted, raised to a higher plane by all-purifying power of style.

William Rubin is director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and his monograph on Anthony Caro has been designed to accompany the retrospective of the English sculptor's work held there last year. It is not a catalogue of the exhibition, which would have been welcome, but provides a long essay on Caro's career, the best available photographic record of his work, a chronology and a full bibliography of the writing on this most significant artist. Professor Rubin's stance is declaratory. He wishes to assert Caro's historical importance, his superiority over all other contemporary sculptors, and perhaps to replace them. The reader is told that his book is: "It takes only one great artist to keep a tradition alive."

What is this tradition, and how can it be the preserve of one English artist whose first independent works were made as recently as 1960? Professor Rubin is speaking of the constructed metal sculpture made by the American artist David Smith, a contemporary of Caro's. Abstract Expressionist painter, that seems a bit thin for a "tradition". But the phenomenon is there, and it is the merit of Rubin's book that in reiterating the critical position of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried (the two writers closest to the artist, whose essential texts have recently been reprinted in Richard Wollheim's *Anthony Caro*, Penguin, 1974) he already knows that an achievement of modernism since Picasso has been done the idea that the sculpture is a new way of seeing.

In no culture apart from our own has the three-dimensional art not bad, the least, equal status with the two-dimensional. A modernist would argue that sculpture in Western Europe has existed as painting's relative for the following centuries. Post-Renaissance painting, all times before the invention of the synthetic Cubism, was illusionistic, however representational its aims, methods were fictive, not actual. The possibilities open to illusionism in sculpture were, too often, liable to be traded artists rather than fine. The means of the medium are not extended. Nor, in one sense, could they be: the major new Renaissance genre, landscape, sculpture did not attempt (or at any rate not with high artistic intent) the new European genre, still life, until 1912—precisely the time when the genres ceased to exist as such for new art. Cubism, as it is called by landscape (Cezanne's)



Children: a six-inch-high sculpture in gold by Kenneth Armitage, to be sold at Christie's on March 5.

Re-inventing sculpture

By Timothy Hilton

WILLIAM RUBIN:
Anthony Caro
196pp. Thames and Hudson. £6.50.

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One could not quite say this of David Smith, although his drawing was made always for his sculpture, which in general improved on his graphic conceptions. Caro has never programmed his sculptures, using neither drawings nor maquettes. Nor has he pre-planned in the sense that he has repeated himself: the uniqueness of one sculpture to the next is astonishing. Smith's sculpture, for all its energy, was more obedient of its own precedents. And yet the closeness of the English to the American artist is crucial.

Smith and Caro met in 1959, the year when Caro first made contact with Clement Greenberg and the painter Kenneth Noland. They came to know each other well in 1963, when Caro was teaching at Bennington College. Smith organized a welding shop for him there. For two years before that, Caro had responded to Smith's art. One of Smith's last works, however, his "Cub" XXIII, appears to have been influenced by Caro. In the year after Smith's death in 1965, Caro made his "Homage to David

Smith" and transported to England material from the Smith studio—some of it already shaped—which became part of sculptures like "Sun Feast" (1969-70) and "Cool Deck" (1970-71).

Professor Rubin's book begins at this point, with Picasso's "Guitar" (1912). That was the first sculpture, ever, made by neither of the traditional procedures. It was not carved, reduced by a chisel from a block larger than the artifact. Nor was it modelled, built up from separate supplies of malleable material. It was put together from previously discrete elements, materials without prior art connotations, sheared-up sheet metal and wire. Caro certainly has this banal connection with Picasso, for after a Cambridge degree in engineering, many years of academic training and then a period as an assistant to Henry Moore, he made his first great works from plates and beams of welded and bolted steel.

One doubts, however, whether the connection between Picasso and Caro is more than technical, even though Caro's "breakthrough" was made by altering his way of working. His first splendid sculpture, from "Midway" to the Tate's "Early one Morning", pieces made between 1960 and 1962, are not at all like the "drawing-in-glass" Plessos of the 1920s, one of which is reproduced by Professor Rubin. They are abstract, have a non-representational quality, and their form is more massive, elements do not relate to each other, as is always the case in Picasso, as is always the case in Caro. There is no stand or podium, and the sculptures are disposed laterally rather than vertically. There is a deeper difference. Their entity could not be imagined in any other medium. While Picasso's sculpture is a transfiguration of his graphic sensibility, Caro's art could exist in no other way than sculpturally.

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Richard Cork

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By Michael Podro

in serves its characteristic social function to appropriate the art of the past as a vehicle for the accepted truth of the present.

The difficulty of Professor Weynert's suggestion is that it assumes that our interest in Greek or any other art of the past does not transcend the interest in the context of production. Why should we have an interest in Homer or of Manet if we have no understanding of historical contexts? It is necessary but not a sufficient element? The art itself can just be its conditions, unless the conditions include the performance of the artist.

It might be argued that there is a special problem about MacIntyre's account of Greek art; that he counts it "in a certain way [to] count as an achievement for the future, exemplary without providing a model".¹ Is this not a claim for absolute value which disregards the historical conditions of the production of any art? But this is not the case. MacIntyre has introduced into his translation from which it derives, first, Schiller's remarks on the impossibility of returning to the "noble simplicity" of Greek art, and secondly, the notion of past producing a model of achievement for the future, exemplary without providing a model. It suggests what force we are to give to the phrase "achievement for the future, exemplary without providing a model" (i.e. exemplification of levels of achievement), "unattainable models" (i.e. certain forms, tied to a situation which cannot be repeated at a later stage of human history).

The weight behind Professor Werkmeister's argument about value set on Greek art is that it is a paradigm of aesthetics usurping the role of history:

The significance of art is thus conceived as independent of historically recorded consciousness of those who lived at the time it was made. Aesthetics

By George Steiner

and the ideographic do coincide in the kind of reiteration of references and linguistic cross-connections which structuralism pesis and decodes.

In other words, this short monograph or "poème épistémologique" as it has been called is full of bright notions and orphic intimations of the kind of intertextual discipline, zeal and expressive sophistication of which there are not too many examples in academic history or in what passes for art history. This simple treasure of higher truths and ideas is a gem across Caracciolo's deliberate, original landscape is rewarding.

M. Serres is a viewer of probing intelligence and Carpaccio an endlessly "dense" and "plotted" artist. M. Serre's decipherments are, therefore, frequently exhilarating and even persuasive. He has suggestive things to say concerning the arching bridge (translation, motion as narrative) and successive, com-

...saturated, and successively encapsulated, "staged" levels of space in the "Sacra Conversazione" of the Cibo Museum. How many art-historians, let alone ordinary museumgoers, will have troubled to look closely at the extraordinary symbolic patterns made up by the human and animal remains underneath the

charging seed in Carpaccio's "Saint George," or correlated these patterns with the emblematic symmetry of the foliage in the background? The exact meaning of the "flower alohebet" displayed on the window-sill in the poignant "Dream of St. Ursula" is beautifully spelt out, and M. Scree is surely right

when he finds the same woman shown at different stages of life, or in different "planes of significance" in the great painting of "Two Courtesans". In the case of "St. Stephen Preaching in Jerusalem", moreover, "iconography" and "semiotics" do, for once, cohere naturally. The subject of

the picture is speech. St Stephen
is the first preacher of the Word
who has not, himself, had any direct
contact with the Incarnation, with
the Logos made flesh. The young
martyr will soon be stoned for his
pains. Stone and word, the judiciary

Two problems nag. The first is relatively trivial. In his commentary on the "St. Augustine in his Call" M Serres observes that there are on the shelves in the gale's study, or his worktable, on the floor, in the open cabinet, precisely ninety-four volumes, this being the number listed by Augustine himself in a balance-sheet drawn up in 426. This detail crucially strengthens the concordance between space and statement, between paratext and visual pattern. But let M Serres who has

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The second problem is fundamental. It is not the preciosity, the opaqueness, the meta-mathematical pretensions of so much structuralist and semiotic writing which worries one (very difficult issues are, after all, being tackled by exceptionally subtle and impetuous minds). It is the essentially exploitative snoco, the use of a painting, literary text, ethnographic situation towards ends which are selfistic. The Caracciolo

neiting, the Du-Bellay sonnet, the passage from Freud are the accessions of the contingent platform for, immesely inflationary and narcissistic, flights of discourse. There is a profound absence of disinterestedness, of sublimation, of autonomous integrity and even mystery of the object or phenomenon which is being "deciphered". In what way would M. Serres's "semiology" apply only to Carpaccio or be inapplicable to, say, Mantegna or Vermeer? The appetita for normative vulnerability which drives structural

lam almost rules but such queries
But they remain, as tenacious, as
reticent of revelation as is every
major and therefore singular work
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The writers say that they are less concerned to labour the fact that art-historians have so little regard for the integrity of the individual work, than to investigate its reasons. The passage from Woolf's, therefore, needs to be looked at in this context. The most important reason for his attempt at generalization, where painting is concerned, was to pick out this way a painter formulated his subject, to direct attention to the act of painting, so that the

A painting more remote from the spectator, or more immediate. The ambiguity has fourteenth-century parallels, as where the Madonna is placed in a picture within a picture and reaches out past the interior frame. Given the change in scale and the way the gold ground would reflect light for someone kneeling in front of the panels—probably the only time they would ordinarily be seen open—this ambiguity would probably have been enforced. A second, Wölfflinian, point is the way a relieving

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different stages of life, or great "planes" of significance in the great painting of "bourgeois". In the case of the Ethiopian preaching in Jorru, moreover, "iconography" and "symbolics" do, for once, coincide. The subject of the painting is speech. St Stephen, the first preacher of the Word, did not, himself, had any direct contact with its incarnation, with the Word made flesh. The young man who is stoned for his

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